

[Folklore—Yiddish]

[?]

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER M. S. Verschleiser

ADDRESS 1419 Jesup Ave.

DATE Nov. 23, 1938

SUBJECT FOLKLORE- YIDDISH

1. Date and time of interview Nov. 19
2. Place of interview Hester Park, East Broadway
3. Name and address of informant Mr. Goldfarb
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Library of Congress

A stranger whom the writer engaged in conversation on a park bench. An elderly looking Jew with spectacles, well dressed, seemingly retired.

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER M. S. Verschleiser

ADDRESS 1419 Jesup Ave.

DATE NOV. 23rd

SUBJECT FOLKLORE - YIDDISH THE MESSIAH

In our town there was a man who everybody called, "the Messiah". He, himself, called himself the Messiah.

He was a tall lanky man with a blond beard and he liked to drink. He used to talk about himself that he in the real Messiah, the grandson of King David and that he would soon release all the Jews and bring them back to Palestine. He had this habit. Before the Day of Atonement the Jewish custom was that the Jewish man bowed down and the beadle of the synagogue would strike him with a leather strap. Of course it was never done very seriously. So this Messiah, or his real name was, Jacob, liked to take over the role of the beadle and stand before the synagogue and deal out the lashes. The Jews of the town took the matter jokingly and would say "The Messiah is punishing us for our sins." The rich people would be the ones to evade his beatings but the poor people would really lie down and take the prescribed number, thirty-nine lashes.

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We used to ask him, "Why don't you beat the rich man like you beat the poor man?"

To this he would answer, "Well, you know, rich Jews don't like to be hit. They are rich."

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"And the poor people like it?", he was asked.

"The poor have no choice," he answered. "They got beatings all year, so it doesn't make any difference to them."

We would ask, "But don't the rich deserve to get a lashing even more than the poor? Don't they sin more?"

He would answer in this way. "Naturally, you are right. They should be hit. They deserve it. But what can you do. That's the way the world goes. When Messiah will come, and he would point to himself," and bring the Jews back to Palestine, the world will be different."

Comment: This story seems to be too literary and most likely the man read it or heard it and gives it as having happened in his own town.